

Jim Mazur's

2025

Derby Day

Epilog

Published By
Progressive Handicapping, Inc.
9630 NW 39th Ct • Hollywood, FL 33024
1-800-272-8039

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Print Date: May 5, 2025

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As is my custom, I always recap the Oaks and the Derby day cards. The Derby card was contested under trying conditions with constant rain and OFF DIRT and OFF TURF throughout the day. Let's see how things turned out.

Selections For Race 1

	Prog #	Horse	Comment if any
<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	11 12	Coffee Talk (4-1) Chillax (5-1)	Formidable Godolphin uncoupled entry but they have to overcome the outside posts.
<i>Value Plays</i>	4	Sturdy (6-1)	Seems poised to break mdn after sharp Aqu try.
<i>Bombers</i>	5	Banded Humor (30-1)	Solid FTS Sire Rating grades but trainer is overall low %.

No surprise that the dirt track was sealed SLOPPY. I would have thought that the turf course might be listed as yielding but it came up GOOD. FOUNTAIN LAKE wasn't on my radar but he wired at 8-1. That gave trainer John Ortiz two undercard winners on the weekend...both at a price; both wire jobs. Ortiz came into the weekend batting 6% from 149 starters. CHILLAX ran 2nd.

Selections For Race 2

	Prog #	Horse	Comment if any
<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	10	Generous Lover (7-2)	Was running faster than these last year but now makes seasonal debut for trainer who is 0/15 with 90+ day layoffs at the CD spring meet but 20% at other meets.
<i>Value Plays</i>	4	Home Game (6-1)	Made a similar stretchout move last summer with Ellis Park with Corrales aboard. Solid chance to upset #10.
<i>Bombers</i>	3	Izzy's Monster (15-1)	Just scored at Hawthorne. Thus the "Last Out Winner Ignored" angle is in play.
<i>Heads Up</i>	8	Lemon Muffin (5-1)	Likes to run 2nd and is 6-0-3-1 at CD lifetime. You know what to do.

Last year, LEMON MUFFIN ran 8th in the Ky Oaks. She hadn't done much since and had a severe case of seconditis (18-1-6-3). When doing my *Twilight Zone* plays for 2025 Oaks, I forgot to delete LEMON MUFFIN'S prep race on the sheet after copying the 2024 *Twilight Zone* table from one year to another.

My trusty editor, Brad Morgan, caught the error. I then noticed that LEMON MUFFIN was in this race and, without even looking at her pps noted that she would win the second race. Ha Ha. Well, she did win the race to cure her 2nditis beating my MOST LIKELY choice.

Selections For Race 3

	Prog #	Horse	Comment if any
<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	3	Valentinian (6-1)	Beyer increased when moved from sprint to route. Has the best route Beyer in the field. A bargain at 6-1
<i>Value Plays</i>	5 9	Goal Oriented (4-1) Tiz Secure (5-1)	Team Baffert runs a pair. Both ran fast when breaking maiden first time out in a sprint. Include in P5.
<i>Bombers</i>	11	Sorcerer's Silver (8-1)	Won debut and then alwn1x at GP now stretches from sprint to route for Win Early trainer Romans.

VALENTINIAN had solid OFF TRACK SIRE RATINGS; so did HYPNUS, not picked by me earlier in the week. I used them both in DD and P3s. HYPNUS ran 2nd to VALUE PLAYER GOAL ORIENTED bet down to 6-5.

Selections For Race 4 *Knicks Go*

	Prog #	Horse	Comment if any
<i>Heads Up: Many entrants in this race are coming OFF LASIX. I have tried to ferret out the runners that have performed best when OFF of LASIX.</i>			
<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	9	Liberal Arts (3-1)	Was rank off the layoff but shows a previous CD win at the distance and sports a 4-2-0-2 CD record. I like the switch back to Saez.
<i>Value Plays</i>	10	Implementation (6-1)	Just won a \$150k GP stakes OFF LASIX. Has one of the top Beyers in the field.
<i>Bombers</i>	13	New King (12-1)	Just moved from Baffert's barn to Brittany Russell's and ran big in the Laurel mud OFF LASIX. Irad jumps on for a runner that has a previous win at the race distance.

The Knicks Go was fairly wide open. It took a grinding finish but MOST LIKELY LIBERAL ARTS got up late at 9-5. My other two selections ran out.

Distaff Turf Mile (1st Leg of the Middle Pick 5 that ends in Race 9)

Selections For The American Turf

<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	Sacred Wish (3-1) Special Wan (5-2)
<i>Value Plays</i>	Five Towns (10-1) Movin On Up (5-1)
<i>Bombers</i>	Venencia (15-1) Serene Seraph (20-1)

“C” TEAM

#	Horse
	#3 #4 #9

“A” TEAM

#	Horse
1	Venencia (15-1)
2	Movin On Up (5-1)
6	Sacred Wish (3-1)
10	Special Wan (5-2)

“B” TEAM

#	Horse
5	Five Towns (10-1)
7	Tax Implications (5-1)
8	Poolside with Slim (8-1)

I liked both of my BOMBERS in here and tied them up with the other logicals. But two runners from C TEAM—PIN UP BETTY and SIMPLY IN FRONT—ran 1-2. I actually used PIN UP BETTY in doubles going forward as she had excellent OFF TURF pedigree on both sides. But she couldn't hold off SIMPLY IN FRONT who just wasn't on my radar.

Pat Day Mile

<i>Selections For The Pat Day Mile</i>	
<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	Gate to Wire (6-1)
<i>Value Plays</i>	Macho Music (12-1)
<i>Bombers</i>	Perfect Force (12-1)

<i>“C” TEAM</i>			
#	Horse		
	#3	#4	#8

<i>“A” TEAM</i>	
#	Horse
1	Madaket Road (2-1)
5	Gate to Wire (6-1)
7	Macho Music (12-1)

<i>“B” TEAM</i>	
#	Horse
2	Built (7-2)
6	Gaming (3-1)
9	Perfect Force (12-1)

This turned out to be the best result of the day for me. I always fancy Gulfstream shippers and, in this case, we were encountering a 7f speedster—MACHO MUSIC—that figured to get the jump on the Baffert duo that had been showing speed in routes. Normally, I would be alive with a DD wheel from the previous race but got distracted and then got shut out trying to put in the \$5 ALL-7 DD. Costly mistake.

MACHO MUSIC went right to the front and the two Bafferts couldn't catch him. But I thought GATE TO WIRE would run late and give me a solid *Twilight Zone* exacta replay from the Swale where he had beaten MACHO MUSIC by 5 lengths. He did rally but could only snare 4th. Still, I had win and exacta money and DD wheels going forward into the CD Turf Sprint.

The CD Turf Sprint (Leg 1 Derby City Pick 6 with mandatory payout):

<i>Selections For The CD Turf Sprint</i>	
<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	Think Big (4-1)
<i>Value Plays</i>	Rogue Lightning (7-2) Run Carson (5-1)
<i>Bombers</i>	Boss Sully (15-1) Unconquerable Keen (30-1)

<i>“C” TEAM</i>					
#	Horse				
	#1	#2	#3	#4	

<i>“A” TEAM</i>	
#	Horse
5	Arrest Me Red (6-1)
6	Run Carson (6-1)
7	Think Big (4-1)
8	Rogue Lightning (7-2)

<i>“B” TEAM</i>	
#	Horse
9	Boss Sully (15-1)
10	Unconquerable Keen (30-1)
11	Eamonn (12-1)
12	Mischievous Rogue (20-1)

As I noted in my *Derby Selections*:

“Historically, this race is dominated by a (1) turf sprint specialist; (2) exiting the Shakertown; (3) four or five years old; AND (4) breaking from the outside of the field. This is always my favorite race leading up to the Derby (or the Oaks), and this year we get a bulky field of 12.”

I had to bend the rules a bit when two inside Larry Rivelli entrants scratched. For my Pick 6 play I added BOSS SULLY to my A TEAM. I was concerned that the SoCal shipper had been sharp but hadn't won without LASIX. I also had a nifty \$20 DD going with him with MACHO MUSIC from the Pat Day.

With 100 yards to go, I thought I had hit paydirt. But THINK BIG replicated his grinding finish from the Shakertown to nip BOSS SULLY at the wire. I had that double as well but it paid four times less. Yuck.

After a four-year hiatus, the Shakertown was back as the key angle for this prep.

CD Hdcp (Leg 1 of the Derby Pick 5); (Leg 3 of the Oaks/Derby Pick 6);

<i>Selections For The CD Handicap</i>	
<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	Mullikin (7-2)
<i>Value Plays</i>	Book'em Danno (8-1) Nysos (4-1)
<i>Bombers</i>	Extra Anejo (12-1)

<i>"C" TEAM</i>				
#	Horse			
	#1	#5	#8	#9

<i>"A" TEAM</i>	
#	Horse
3	Book'em Danno (8-1)
6	Extra Anejo (12-1)
10	Nysos (4-1)
11	Mullikin (7-2)

<i>"B" TEAM</i>	
#	Horse
2	Banishing (5-1)
4	Giant Mischief (8-1)
7	Mindframe (3-1)

I had one of my strongest opinions of the day in this race. I would use the top three faves—MINDFRAME, NYSOS, and MULLIKIN—defensively and key on EXTRA ANEJO, winner of the key prep for this and multiple winner at CD and the race distance and bred for OFF TRACKS. The only negative was that his rider off that win, Prat, had opted to ride Bob Baffert's NYSOS. But at 11-1, I went all in on EXTRA ANEJO and rider Joel Rosario.

EXTRA ANEJO had never raced on an OFF TRACK. And sometimes my *Sire Ratings* don't come through. In this case, Rosario found himself in tight quarters and EXTRA ANEJO didn't want any part of it and got rank. Tutti Finutti. He didn't lift a hoof.

Meanwhile, it was MINDFRAME who got the job done, just getting up over Oaklawn Park wonder boy BANISHING by a neck. I was alive in the P6 (along with everyone else!) thanks to the defensive play

American Turf (Leg 1 Derby Pick 4);

<i>Selections For The American Turf</i>	
<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	Zulu Kingdom (4-1)
<i>Value Plays</i>	Test Score (10-1) Scipio (12-1)
<i>Bombers</i>	Classic of Course (20-1)

<i>“A” TEAM</i>	
#	Horse
2	Scipio (12-1)
5	Test Score (10-1)
7	Zulu Kingdom (4-1)
11	Classic of Course (20-1)

<i>“C” TEAM</i>	
#	Horse
	#1 #8 #9 #12 #13 #14 AEs: #15 #16

<i>“B” TEAM</i>	
#	Horse
3	New Century (3-1)
4	Mi Bago(10-1)
6	Maximum Promise (20-1)
10	Iron Man Cal (9-2)

As per my OVERVIEW:

This race is always a difficult puzzle and that trend continues in ‘25 as 14 are entered. Those who get the puzzle right have been rewarded with double-digit payouts in each of the last 10 editions. Historically, I note two key trends: (1) 18 of the last 20 winners raced at either Gulfstream, Tampa, Keeneland or Turfway Park in their final American Turf prep; (2) we’ve seen just two WIRE winners in the last 28 years.

My hope was to catch one of the logicals over a BOMBER in the exacta or trifecta. Or, better yet, in the reverse with the BOMBERS on top. Even better yet, a *Twilight Zone* exacta and trifecta of the Transylvania with TEST SCORE over SCIPPIO over MAUI STRONG.

But my MOST LIKELY—ZULU KINGDOM—spoiled the Rod Serling moment. I expected he would run big and he did! This colt has a habit of pulling up when getting the lead too early. Prat rode him perfectly. TEST SCORE ran big at 5-1 for the place. But my BOMBERS were nowhere to be found as ML fave NEW CENTURY got the show for a chalky \$32 trifecta. Solid handicapping per the *Selections* but nothing to show for it except that I was “*Stayin’ Alive*” in the Pick 6

Derby City Distaff (Leg 4 of the Oaks/Derby Pick 6);

Selections For The Derby City Distaff

<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	Ways and Means (3-1)
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<i>Value Plays</i>	Kopion (8-1) Mystic Lake (8-1)
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<i>Bombers</i>	Haulin Ice (15-1) Positano Sunset (12-1)
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“C” TEAM

#	Horse
	#1 #3 #4 #10 #13 #14 #15AE #16AE

“A” TEAM

#	Horse
2	Kopion (8-1)
6	Mystic Lake (8-1)
8	Ways and Means (3-1)
11	Positano Sunset (12-1)

“B” TEAM

#	Horse
5	Haulin Ice (15-1)
7	Vahva (6-1)
9	Emery (6-1)
12	Hope Road (15-1)

Last year, we encountered a double-digit field, the first in the last 24 editions. This year made it two in a row, as the race wa oversubscribed with 16 entrants. I was looking for the 7f specialists with tactical speed, a recent 97+ Beyer, some CD experience and returning from the last prep within 40 days.

Although I don’t like to play long layoffs in this race, I had the utmost respect for Chad Brown’s WAYS AND MEANS and Richard Mandella’s KOPION. The latter was shipping across the country for Richard Mandella, a trainer who wouldn’t make the trip unless he was convinced the tank was full.

But I went all in on MYSTIC LAKE (16-1) and POSITANO SUNSET (17-1) hoping for the upset or at least a solid exacta or trifecta. There is an old angle of playing Ian Wilkes runners in the mud (his mentor Carl Nafzger used to score with this one all the time). But his POSITANO SUNSET didn’t lift a hoof. Neither did Saffie Joseph Jr.’s MYSTIC LAKE.

KOPION was the read deal as he blew past Baffert’s shipper HOPE ROAD. Luckily I play the *Twilight Zone* in these big races and this was a replay of the Santa Monica. But my \$10 exacta only broke me even. I was spinning wheels as the chalkfest continued.

Turf Classic (Start of Derby Daily Double; Leg 5 of the Oaks/Derby Pick 6)

<i>Selections For The Turf Classic</i>	
<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	Integration (4-1) Spirit of St. Louis (9-2)
<i>Value Plays</i>	Taking Candy (8-1) Running Bee (5-1)
<i>Bombers</i>	Cameo Performance (20-1) Brilliant Berti (12-1)

<i>“C” TEAM</i>					
	#2	#3	#4	#5	#12

<i>“A” TEAM</i>	
#	Horse
1	Integration (4-1)
6	Taking Candy (8-1)
7	Running Bee (5-1)
10	Spirit of St Louis (9-2)

<i>“B” TEAM</i>	
#	Horse
8	Cameo Performance (20-1)
9	Mercante(10-1)
11	Brilliant Berti (12-1)

Per my OVERVIEW:

A win at 9f is always a must in this race. So is at least one start during the current campaign and a 98+ top Beyer. And a previous sharp race at CD also has been a common thread among Turf Classic winners. Here's an interesting stat: WIRE style winners are just 2 for the last 25 editions.

That last stat put me in conflict with a runner that I came to fancy: MERCANTE. He would be lone speed and was a “feel good” story. Apparently he was seriously injured but trainer Brian Knippenberg (farm trainer for owner Carl Pollard) had rehabbed the gelding and run off three wins on the Turfway Park synthetic including the Ky Classic. But my *Sire Ratings* said he was unlikely to handle the OFF TURF.

But, luckily, I let my feel good story angle take precedence and used him on top and bottom but mostly bottom.

MERCANTE ran huge at 13-1 and looked like a winner late in the game. But, again, my CO-MOST LIKELY—SPIRIT OF ST LOUIS—had other ideas. He won with a furious rally. It was still a nice cash out on a \$115 exacta.

Unfortunately, the Pick 6 sequence had chalked out thus far. I had mostly Derby logicals on my ticket so getting back my investment wasn't likely.

THE KENTUCKY DERBY

Selections For The Kentucky Derby

<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	Journalism (3-1) Sovereignty (5-1)
<i>Value Plays</i>	Burnham Square (12-1) Luxor Café (15-1)
<i>Bombers</i>	Citizen Bull (20-1) American Promise (30-1) Admire Daytona (20-1)

“C” TEAM

#	Horse
	#2 #3 #10 #11 #12 #13 #14 #15 #16 #19 #20 #21AE

“A” TEAM

#	Horse
7	Luxor Café (15-1)
8	Journalism (3-1)
9	Burnham Square (12-1)
18	Sovereignty (5-1)

“B” TEAM

#	Horse
1	Citizen Bull (20-1)
4	Rodriguez (12-1)
5	American Promise (30-1)
6	Admire Daytona (30-1)
17	Sandman (6-1)

THE “A” TEAM

Journalism was one of the best profile fits in the field and held a speed edge over his competition with two 100+ Beyers in dirt routes...This guy is a legit fave and my MOST LIKELY. But because anything can happen in the Derby, he may not win.

History is on *Sovereignty’s* side. This son of Into Mischief captured the Fountain of Youth and then ran a solid second in the Florida Derby. And therein lies the key. The Florida Derby has produced 5 of the last 15 Derby winners with the Arkansas and Santa Anita Derbies not far behind (4 each). We are talking stamina top and bottom, a top trainer in William Mott, and proper foundation. Closers like *Sovereignty* often struggle on the speed-favoring Gulfstream surface. This guy should like the long Churchill stretch run.

That was my anaysis in the *Derby Zone* and *Selections*. But, as so often happens in the Derby, we all go looking for fuzzy longshots. To complicate matters, I had sort of convinced myself that LUXOR CAFE was the real deal and that CITIZEN BULL was a sleeper. I cut back my opinion on CB when he drew the one hole but then upgraded BURNHAM SQUARE due to the IAN WILKES IN THE MUD angle. When BAEZA drew in, I put out an EMAIL BLASTER to move him into the GRAY ZONE and demote TIZTASTIC and PUBLISHER.

In the end, the third and first betting faves finished 1-2 in a thrilling finish. BAEZA proved his connections convictions were correct and ran 3rd. More “on the spot” handicapping from the historical profiles especially the DERBY PREP PATH angle. But a chalkfest nonetheless. The Pick 6 paid \$2k and change. Extremely low. The \$0.10 super paid just \$168. What are you gonna do? The IMPORTANT THING is that my publication keeps churning out winners. After that, it’s up to the HANDICAPPING GODS. Does anyone care about races 13 and 14? I don’t and thus no followup. LOL. On to the Preakness!